



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**Date:** August 20, 2015

**To:** Stakeholders

**From:** Eric Fitzer, Community Development Director  
Lloyd Abrams, Long Range Planning Manager  
Joshua Mike, Planner II

**Re:** **Major General Plan Amendment – Land Use Element Update**

### Introduction/History

In lieu of the development of Village Plans, a holistic approach to developing a 'One Surprise', while respecting the city's unique character areas, requires an update to the General Plan 2035. The foundation of this change lies within the Land Use Element, with necessary text amendments to various supporting Elements. After initial public input was received, comments and baseline data were presented to a joint meeting with City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission on February 3, 2015.

Input from the community, stakeholders, Commission, and Council was used to identify various alternative concepts for updating the Land Use Element of the General Plan 2035 in order to provide a better tool for guiding new development and the placement of appropriate uses within the City.

Two land use planning approaches were developed, along with a visual survey, to aid in the identification of a final preferred approach. The Planning and Zoning Commission met on April 16, 2015, and the City Council met on April 21, 2015 to review each approach and make a final recommendation. These discussions resulted in directing staff and the consultant to prepare a new Land Use Element, with supporting changes throughout the General Plan 2035, utilizing the 'Character Area' planning approach.

### Planning Process

The 'Character Area' approach places a greater emphasis on a common vision of land use concepts and built form for a defined area, rather than assigning traditional land use categories to a specific area. With fewer traditional land use categories, the 'Character Area' approach utilizes planning concepts that depend on descriptive Development Types and Sub-Areas to determine appropriate uses and compatibility with adjacent properties, land uses, built form, and neighboring municipal plans. As a result, this new approach to land use planning is represented with a different style and composition to the General Plan 2035 Land Use Element and accompanying Land Use Character Area Map.

This approach is designed to provide more flexibility in determining an area's or development proposal's land use options. However, the 'Character Area' approach still includes guidelines

and policies to support and steer what the character and built form will look like, as opposed to a prescriptive application of land uses. It is further recognized that these changes will also require modifications to the current Surprise Unified Development Code, which is currently undergoing a revision and will incorporate the appropriate adjustments to support this approach.

While the Land Use Element is the foundation piece for this Major General Plan Amendment, it is also necessary to amend the text of additional Elements to ensure a consistent vision and policy throughout the General Plan 2035. Consequently, supporting text and mapping changes are included in the Growth, Economic Development, Housing, Roadway Systems, Transit, and Water Resources Elements. The Urban Design Element (not required through state statute) will be removed in order to address these goals and policies holistically within the proposed Land Use Element.

Furthermore, changes to the Recreation & Open Space Element is included in this Major Amendment to support this 'Character Area' approach and provide consistency to the recently updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Parks and Trails Master Plan made by Community Recreational Services (CRS).

### Future Steps

Updating the General Plan 2035 Land Use Element will provide a new approach to how the goals and policies and the Land Use Character Area Map will represent the future land use categories and the implementation of future development. The community, stakeholders, the Commission, and Council will be presented with the "Character Area" approach through the draft Land Use Element.

Attached to this narrative is a small excerpt of some key components from the draft Land Use Element. It shows examples of the introductions to Character Areas (and the Development Types that define them), the proposed Land Use Character Area Map, and the compatibility tables. The full draft will describe existing conditions, contain the goals and policies, include sub-sections that illustrate strategies and guidelines that make up the full vision of this land use planning approach, i.e. 'Compatibility and Transition Measures', 'Aesthetics and Built Form', 'Typical Uses', etc.

These attachments are a preview of the revised Land Use Element for informational purposes only, with revisions and language yet to be finalized. The fully revised draft of the Land Use Element will be presented at the stakeholder meeting on September 9, 2015. In accordance with state statute, staff will provide a full draft of the revised General Plan 2035 text and maps as part of the required 60-day review period.

### Attachments

[DRAFT Surprise Land Use Element](#)  
[DRAFT Surprise Land Use Character Area Map](#)